

Session 30

Vayigash - The Rise of Judah – The King of Israel

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtyiKOUeIBo&t=128s>

Shalom fellowship. It is so good to see you all today. Israel is going into a third lockdown. It has just been a crazy day. Everything last minute and somehow it all comes together right in time. And so, shavua tov, you should have a good week. I hope you all had a beautiful Shabbat.

When we come to this time of the year, you know, we read Parashat Vayigash. And, I always think of the time that Ari and I were called to reserve duty on atsav sh'mona, an emergency draft. It's like, you know, you're living your life, you're in Israel's reserve duty, there is this option that they like, quick, phew....go to the army. It's like, usually they give you months in advance. I've been serving in the IDF since I was 20. I was in my mid-30's. I'd always heard about atsav sh'mona, that was always a possibility. I'd never been in a war of Israel. And you know, I just never called up in such an abrupt way in my whole life. You know, usually, the six months at least. You know, tell your work, get your family in order, get things ready, atsav sh'mona, you have three hours to get home, pack your bag, make it to the emergency meeting spot, and you're taken to base. And Israel is going to war.

And it's just the most jarring experience. You're in your air-conditioned office, sipping a cup of cappuccino and in a few hours you're fulling dressed in uniform, you're in the middle of the desert, marching through some drill and preparing for the next mission. It's like, what? That was fast and you know, in Israel, you just have to remain very flexible in Israel. You never know when there's going to be another lockdown, when there might be another war. You just have to go with the flow. And you never know what might hit.

And in life, you have to be flexible, you know you never know, a global pandemic might strike and you might have to learn how to live in this new kind of normal. So, Israel is actually good for living because it always keeps you flexible. You know, it's really interesting, the ideal spiritual strength in the Biblical mind, isn't hard. It's not like superman standing before a train and the train comes and you're like absorbing that and you're so strong, stopping it in its tracks. That's like the opposite. The ideal spiritual strength of gevurah, which is represented by Isaac, is very soft. It's very flexible. It can't be broken because it's like, it's able to bend. It's able to go with reality as it needs to go. The power is in the ability to surrender to reality.

And you know, it's a little bit more like, I would say, western style fighting. It's like two big guys in a ring, just punching at each other. And the Judean Biblical model, it's a little bit more like Kung Fu, less like boxing. It's like you use the momentum of the other player against them, and that's really a true strength because you're using the reality to thrust yourself forward, to move yourself forward. That's really the best way to think of it.

And you know, in this world of spirit, in the world of the mind, the more flexible you are, the more able you're to flow with reality, the less rigid, the more powerful.

And so, last session, we talked about Joseph's coat of many colors representing the spectrum of light. And Jacob's blessing that in the radical experiences of light, the ups and downs, each experience, each challenge is lighting up another aspect of being, another aspect of who we are, revealing another dimension of our character, activating our full potential, allowing us to come into our full self.

And so, for those who have served in the military, that reality is self-evident. The experience of serving, defending your country, protecting each other in the army. There are experiences, stretches and situations, you're thrust into building yourself into the person that you could never have become without that experience. And for me, one of those experiences was specifically in prayer. And that's why it reminds me of this parsha of Vayigash so much. In our unit, you know at that time, I was Ari's commander in the IDF. Ari is a sharpshooter. I was the platoon sergeant. We've been serving together for I don't even know how many years at this point. And both Ari and I were quasi-rabbis in our units. That wasn't like an official title. We were just the soldiers in our brigade and being the IDF, you serve with every kind of Israeli under the sun.

When it came to religious rights, Ari and I were deemed the most suited for the job. So we sort of became the rabbis of like our unit in that way. And after 24 hours of prep for our first mission, we were called out to action. This is like, you know, one day ago I'm in my office in Jerusalem, the next I'm literally on my way to the border of Gaza, facing the Hamas. And we were sent to the border of the Gaza strip. At that time, we had intel that Hamas was digging tunnels underneath the security border and were preparing to attack, kill, kidnap Jews in the little villages that are surrounding the Gaza Strip. Now we know that Hamas literally had hundreds of tunnels. At that time no one imagined that they had such a sophisticated system of so many tunnels because that means that millions and millions of dollars that were given to the Hamas to help build schools, hospitals, infrastructure, taxes that were taken from good people in Europe and in America, were taken and used mostly for the purpose of trying to kill Jews and threaten Israel's existence by building tunnels under the wall in order to attack us.

Who would have thought? And so, our mission in this case was to be the first line of defense between the Hamas and the Jewish villages that were a kilometer or so away from the border. So, we were dropped off and marched covertly about an hour until we reached our location and then we began digging ditches. And that's going to be our cover and our camouflage as we wait to encounter the Hamas as they come out of the tunnels. And at best, we neutralize them, and at worst, we at least notify the communities and prepare the next line of defense that the Hamas are coming. So that's not the best place to be in war, the front lines. That's pretty rough. But that is the way war is.

And so I remember, I was talking to Ari, he's literally right next to me and we're digging our ditches. We're digging our ditches and I'm telling him, just this was absolutely head spinning, that just hours ago, I was in Jerusalem. I'm enjoying my day, I'm digging a ditch now, waiting to encounter the Hamas with Kassam rockets literally flying over our heads. And just like, wow, what do we do with that? That is just too much for me to just absorb right now. And I remember Ari, he said something I'll just never forget. He said for countless generations, the Jewish people were asked to dig their own graves. And as they were murdered by different enemies, different nations, and we were powerless in the exile, the Jews did just that. And we dug our own graves and then we were killed in the graves that we had dug. And now, in our generation, in the generation of Mashiach, we're digging ditches to combat the evil that seeks to murder the innocent, defend the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. We are the luckiest Jews in the world. I was like, gosh Ari, it's a good perspective.

So here we are now, you know, preparing for battle, but the story that I want to tell you about today, it's about Vayigash. What does that have to do with anything? It's the story how we got there. And when we went out on our first mission. It was an armed vehicle. And it's our platoon is sent in. And you know, you go out from the base to our location. We're dropped off, you know, a while away from where we're actually going to be and then you sort of march off on your distance. But the ride from the base to the drop-off spot, just about at least 30 minutes. And so, we're all cramped up inside this armed vehicle. And I'm looking around at all these young men. Most of us are in reserve duty. Most of us have families by now, and everyone is just stunned at the speed of this whole thing. And all of us are in our, you know, IDF experience. We've gone on similar missions, hundreds of times. But you can sense that in the vehicle, everyone is nervous. Everyone is like, ok, this is real. This is really happening now. Were not 18 anymore. We have a lot more to lose and a lot more to leave behind us, if anything were to happen to us. This is real.

And it just was so fast, it's just hard to really explain. That's the challenge of it all. And so after about ten minutes in just silence, no one's talking, we're just quietly going out to our mission. One of the guys says, Jeremy. He's like, Jeremy...prayer of the traveler. Now in our platoon, there are religious Jews, there are traditional Jews, there are super secular Jews. There was one Russian non-Jew. And they're Ashkenazi Jews, Sephardic Jews, Ethiopian Jews, just in our unit. It's like new immigrants, Israelis from birth. It's like a whole microcosm of Israeli society right here in our little armed vehicle and it's like our unit is like Israeli society in an armored vehicle.

And one of the most traditional Sephardic Jews, asking me to lead the unit in prayer before our mission. And of course, I'm in. And so I start – May it be your will before You, Hashem, our God, the God of our fathers, that You should walk with us in peace. And one guy yells out Amen. And it's customary to save your amen for the end of the prayer. But he was touched that God should walk with us in peace. Amen. He yelled it out early. “And You should march

with us in peace.” And then a few more people came in and they say, “amen.” “And You should guide us in peace.” And half of the armed vehicle was, “Amen.” “And you may allow us to arrive at our location in life, in joy, and in peace.”

And now, the vehicle is like, “Amen!” “And may You save us from the hands of any enemy or ambush on the way.” And by this time, the whole vehicle is like rocking. It didn’t matter if you’re a Jew, you’re a non-Jew, you’re a black Jew, you’re a yellow Jew, Sephardic, Ashkenazi, we’re all together now, “Amen!”

It was like, whoa, so powerful. It was like the closest thing that I’d ever experienced to what it must have been like to be a part of King David’s army. Just like, we’re going out, we are ready for this mission now and the Torah portion begins with the words, vayigash, and he approached. As Judah approaches Joseph, and there’s this ancient Judean custom that before we enter into the silent prayer, we take three steps forward. Sometimes you can be at the kotel and you’ll see Jews do like a little shuffle. It’s like one, two, three, one, two three. They do this like little dance, like one, two, three, one, two, three. And then they bow down and they start. It’s like, what is that about? Why are they doing this little shuffle? Like the Jewish shuffle. It’s like, no, there’s an ancient Judean tradition that you take three steps forward, and then you enter into prayer. Why do we do that? Those three steps correspond in our minds to the three times in Scripture that the word “vayigash” is mentioned.

One time it appears with Abraham. It says, and he approached God to prayer on behalf of Sedom. It appears now with Judah and Joseph, where he’s now approaching Joseph on behalf of his brother, Benjamin. And then, it appears another time with Elijah the prophet, when he approaches Mount Carmel in standoff with the prophets of Ba’al on behalf of God. And when we pray, we’re not only meant to stand before the Almighty, we are meant to step up, step forward, confront, you know, step up for justice on behalf of the other. Avraham was on behalf of Sedom. You know, he’s stepping up on behalf of those that aren’t even worthy of being stepped up. Maybe even his enemies. It’s like vayigash Yehudah, he’s stepping up for his brother.

Elijah is stepping up on behalf of God. It’s like, so we’re all stepping up here. When you step up into prayer for yourself, you’re stepping up as a collective. And we take three steps forward, it just like a physical reminder that as we are praying for ourselves, we’re called to step up on behalf of the other. And the best and most authentic prayer is when praying for ourselves, we have our minds and our hearts toward the other. Like soldiers on a mission, like that night, it was like such a prayer, so strong and praying for our safety, but you know? Praying for everyone to come home in shalom. So in our prayer, in some ways, when we are praying for the other, you know, we’re praying for ourselves. Only in like our prayers for our children, for our spouse, for our grandchildren, for our friends, for our fellowship, for our country. It’s like

so now, it like the world is calling us into prayer. That's what the world needs now. The world needs prayer and I'm just telling you the miracles of this fellowship, I shared a few fellowships ago. Four families, financial issues. I don't know what's going to happen. I've been a little bit you know, there's a lot of medical issues in the world here in our fellowship. And I'm telling you each one, it's like amazing. I'm telling you next session, I'm just going to dedicate a section to this fellowship, to the glory of God of what is happening, because all of us are interconnected somehow in these prayers. But the prayers are powerful here. They like enter to Israel, up to God. It's like something is going on here. And so, we are just so lucky to have all of us here together, directed towards Israel, directed toward heaven.

And so, how beautiful that our fellowship is somehow our own House of Prayer for all nations. And it's already like bringing blessing into the world, beyond any of my expectations. So next session, I want to share with you our own vayigash, that we are actually coming together here. And it's blessing everyone in this fellowship. It's just remarkable. And so, let's kick it off, let's kick it off with a prayer because something is happening.

Hashem, our Father in heaven, avinu shabashamayim, we don't know what to make of the world now. It's just, we are loyal to Your direction. We gather here every week, turning into Your word, turning toward Your word, turning into Your message, intertwining our hearts together in prayer for this broken world that is just literally sick with this virus. Just, Hashem, we all need healing. Heal this world. Thank you for the gift of today. Thank You for the ark of this fellowship. Thank You for bringing us here together in these times. May You open up our hearts that these messages can go inside. Guide us in our lives in this chaos. Show us the spice carts of Your Providence to give us courage and strength on our path toward You. Hashem bless the members of this fellowship. Hear their prayers and let them know that You are answering them whatever Your answer might be. We invited You and your direction into our lives. Wherever you take us, we answer hineni, we are here. And all of the nations of this fellowship together, we all say, Amen!

All right, I mean it's just like imagine the whole world coming together and we're all just lifting it up to God. It's so special. What an opportunity to be alive in these times. We are so fortunate to be a part of this fellowship. Ok, so I want to start the fellowship off today with Ari. I know he has a key message for our time, almost like a message encapsulated in the text, waiting for our generation to receive the message we need so badly. And then, from that, we're going to add Tehila, and then from that we're going to build a whole structure and it's going to be absolutely marvelous. So Ari, please, your turn.

Ari

Shalom my friends. More than ever in my life, I feel like we're on the cusp of redemption. You know, sometimes I hesitate to say the word redemption because it's such a loaded word. It

means something different to everyone and to many people, it's a heavily religious word, with abstract, theological implications. And I, myself cannot claim to know what it even fully means. But since moving to Israel, since starting our mission out here on the Judean frontier, I've tasted it. I've felt it, I've touched it more than ever before. So, the question I want to touch upon is exactly that. What does redemption mean? What does it really mean? So to answer this question, we need to go back to the very beginning. We need to look at some of the initial seeds from which redemption sprouted. From which redemption is sprouting. To understand that the true nature of redemption. To even start to understand the beginning of what redemption truly means. And I think you'll understand and you'll agree with me that the closer we look at the roots of redemption, the more surprisingly and unexpectedly dark they are. Because when talking about redemption, you would expect perfection and holiness and nobility. Not the sin and the darkness that we actually find.

Now the first place to start in this long journey towards redemption, would be at the beginning of the exile, the beginning of sin, when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree and were exiled from the Garden of Eden. Because from the minute of their banishment, the long history, the story of the return of mankind begins. The redemption of mankind is a more beautiful story than the human mind can even imagine.

Now we've touched on this before and for time constraints, I won't dig too deep, but one thing that I believe all sages agree upon is that while Adam did disobey God and it was an act of evil and a terrible mistake, his intentions were good. As we discussed before, perhaps he felt the lechem busha, as our sages explained, the bread of shame. That he felt unworthy and undeserving of this blissful, prophetic experience. And wanted to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, in order to infuse within himself that evil, so he would be able to overcome it out of his love for God, in order to serve God, in order to be able to do something, anything for God. So he eats from the forbidden tree and is banished and the story of redemption begins.

The next dark route of redemption I want to discuss is the story of Lot and his daughters. Their mother turns into a pillar of salt and their home is destroyed traumatically before their eyes. Their entire city is destroyed before their eyes. They find themselves in a cave with their father, and our sages tell us that they truly believed that they were the last people on earth. That the entire earth, that all of the world had been wiped out. And so, in order to propagate mankind, they violate the severe Biblical restriction and abomination of incest and they lie with their father and bear children by him. The younger one names her son, Moab, meaning from the father. She names him after the sin, itself. And why does this qualify as a root of redemption? Because who emerged from Moab, many generations later? Ruth, the great grandmother of King David.

The next up on the journey of dark redemptive roots, is the story from last week's Torah portion in which Yehudah, Judah, gives his two eldest sons to Tamar. And due to their sin and

their unworthiness they die. He's supposed to give his youngest and last remaining son to Tamar, but out of fear, he doesn't, leaving her unable to remarry and just in limbo. She boldly takes matters into her own hands and poses as a prostitute along the path which she knows Judah will travel. And Judah shockingly solicits the supposed prostitute and from this union came Peretz, from who came Boaz, the great grandfather of King David. And not only the genealogy of King David, but the continued genealogy to the eventual Mashiach, through his son, Solomon. For Solomon was the son, remember of Bat Sheva, whom King David took in a sinful manner, that at the very least, appeared to border on adultery.

So we see that the Messianic roots, the very seeds from which redemption is blossoming come from such darkness as being connected to incest, prostitution, adultery, disobedience. How can such a thing be? Why would Hashem orchestrate the redemption of mankind through such dark and sinful roots? So, if there's one verse in the Torah that I believe answers this question, it's in this week's Torah portion. It comes in the wake of what I believe is the most dramatic and emotional moment in the entire Torah.

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. They're stunned. They're confounded beyond words. Their minds couldn't have even thought such a thing was possible. And now, their minds are whirling with confusion and disorientation, disbelief, even fear. This is Joseph? Would he take revenge on them? Does he hate them for their horrific sin against him? And in the first and greatest act of forgiveness in the entire Torah or perhaps in all of history, Joseph says in chapter 45, verse 8, V'atah, lo atem...so now, it was not you who sent me here, but God. And He has made me a father to Pharaoh and a lord of all of his house and a ruler throughout all of Egypt.

Joseph forgives them. Rabbi Sacks, may his memory be for a blessing, points out that Genesis is a thematic revelation of evolving family relations, particularly between brothers. Cain and Abel, Rabbi Sacks explains, ends with murder. Isaac and Ishmael ends with them standing side by side, burying their father, Abraham together. Jacob and Esau, ends with them meeting and embracing, but then going their own separate ways. But only now, in the story of Joseph is there complete tshuva, complete repentance and profound forgiveness which culminates in the brothers living together and coming back together as brothers and as family. Far stronger than they ever were before.

And I believe that the only way Joseph was able to completely and thoroughly forgive his brothers is because he has internalized the truth of Hashem to his very core. As I've shared before Maimonides, he says that the greatest distance in the world is the distance between your head and your hearts. You can know a truth in your head, but internalizing that truth into your heart, well that's a life mission that may be the primary purpose we're here in this world. As Deuteronomy, Devarim, tells us in chapter 4:39, know therefore this day and consider it and

internalize it into your heart, that Hashem is God in the heaven above and upon the earth beneath. There is no other.

Because of his complete faith, which he's nurtured and refined over the past 22 years of slavery, Joseph believed or even knew that everything that happened to him was from God and is therefore good. His knowledge of this truth was so thorough and internalized that he was able to forgive his brothers and love them with a complete heart without any doubt or grudges or reservations. The only way such forgiveness is possible, is by fully integrating the truth that everything is from God and everything is good. As we've mentioned before, *gam zu la'tova*, this too is for the good. In this one pivotal moment, we see true repentance and true forgiveness. Repentance in Judah who was transformed from a man who sold his brother into slavery and to a man willing to be enslaved to save his brother from it. And forgiveness in Joseph who embraces his brothers, comforted them and assured them that everything that happened was from God.

I remember very, very early on in our journey, Jeremy and I were speaking to a Christian group in Jerusalem and after my speech, a German woman came to me with tears in her eyes and she handed me a note. And I'll never forget, it was written with bright red marker. I've been looking for it ever since. And it said, please forgive us for the horrible things that we have done to your people, the Jewish people. Please forgive us, please forgive us. She handed me this note, she looked in my eyes with tears streaming down her cheeks and she said, we are so sorry. I was so shocked, I never experienced anything like that before. I didn't know whether to say thank you, I didn't know what to think. I didn't even know if responding was even my place. And the more I reflected on it, the more I realized that true forgiveness and true repentance go hand in hand.

For Maimonides explains that true repentance happens when the sinner finds himself in the same situation, in the same circumstance, but rather than take the path of evil, they take the route to righteousness. I'm sure that you've heard the remarkable story of the Germans who volunteered to help us build up this mountain. When I asked them why that they were here, why us? They said, that after all the horrific things that their parents and their grandparents, that their nation did to the Jewish people, they wanted to come out to here and to bless us and build and to bring life. They said that here on the Judean frontier, this is where the world is the most against us and so this is where they want to stand with us.

Just this morning, right behind me, right now, this very morning, Germans came out again to bless us. And what do they want to do? It's difficult to imagine such a thing, but they want to build this beautiful pergola deck, jutting out behind our House of Prayer. This is them, right behind me. They want to build this beautiful pergola deck overlooking the Valley of Arugot, where we can host weddings in the hills of Judea, fulfilling the prophecy that Jeremiah shared in chapter 33. He said, thus said the Lord, again there shall be heard in this place in the cities of

Judah and the voices of gladness the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. The voice of those who shall say, praise the Lord of Hosts.

We've been singing these words at weddings in the exile for thousands of years, that there would be weddings in the hills of Judea, but then they were just words of yearning and prayer and hope against all odds. And now, we're singing them here in Judea and who's helping us to bring these words to life? The source of our greatest persecution. The German people right here behind me.

And it's fitting because it was Germans that contributed to building the House of Prayer and the synagogue itself. For my entire life, I'll never forget that day in which my eyes beheld Chamad, an Arab, descendant of Ishmael hand a stone to Tomas, the grandson of a Nazi and a descendant of Esau, who handed the stone to Abu Kamal, descendant of Ishmael, who handed the stone to Tomas, a descendant of Esau. Ishmael and Esau, our two brothers who have been the greatest sources of our persecution, building a House of Prayer for Jews in Judea with which Israel can bless and be a blessing to the entire world. If that's not a taste of redemption, I don't know what is.

So, why my friends, must the flower of redemption blossom from such dark roots? Because without those dark roots, redemption itself would have been impossible, would have been meaningless. Only by looking back now and seeing the undeniable and irrefutable Hand of God in all our troubles and all our sorrow, can we raise the sparks. Only by looking back at our persecutors with hearts of love and forgiveness can we reveal the hidden light that has remained hidden throughout history. That light, that light is the light of redemption. In Hebrew, the word for exile is gula. Here, I wrote it up right here, I hope you can see it.



The word for exile is gula, gimmel, lamed, vav, hey. That's on the top. The word for redemption is geula. Gimel, aleph, vav, lamed, hey. What's the difference between these two words? Aleph. Aleph is one. Aleph represents God, Himself, the ultimate oneness. When we see the Hand of God, even in the worst of exile, and we understand that he never left us, that it was all from Him, and He was with us the whole time, at that moment the aleph is put into exile and all of history is immediately transformed into geula, into redemption.

Hashem, please give us the eyes to look back at our most painful, devastatingly dark exiles and to see with our eyes, to see with our minds, to see with our hearts that you are behind it all, orchestrating all of it to bring us to this moment here, right now, back in our indigenous homeland of Judea, in our Promised Land of Israel. And allow us to look back at our tormentors with forgiveness. Allow us to view our persecutors with love. Put in our mouth's words of

compassion and blessings so we can finally come together as the brotherhood of mankind and sing Your praises together in the holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Shalom, my friends, I love you all back to you Jeremy.

Jeremy

Wow, Ari, kol hakavod. That is just so good, and so beautiful. I don't even know what to say, it's just every week you deliver. Thank you for the message that we need in these dark times so we can elevate it, that we can bring the light into these dark places, somehow. Somehow our farm, somehow this fellowship, it's like a place of healing, but like a global healing between nations. Nations that were enemies are coming together in the mountains of King David. It's just unbelievable what we're all a part of.

And so, I was learning with Tehila this Shabbat, and she was teaching me another aspect, deeply connected to what Ari just spoke about, just from another perspective. And she's such a great teacher. She's so smart and so gifted at explaining. So now, she's going to bring the second brick here, we're going to start building this up together. So back by popular demand is your very own Tehila.

Tehila

Hey guys, hope you're all doing well. I wanted to share with you a little bit of Torah that Jeremy and I learned together on Friday night about the Torah portion. And we found it to be really insightful and encouraging. So, it's from this book, called the Meishiloach, written by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner, a Chasidic master from Izbica, Poland. He lived in the first half of the 19th century. He died at a young age of like 53, but he just had the most amazing way of understanding matters of the soul. And his writings are just so, so deep.

And so, we learned something and I actually translated it word for word because I thought every single word there is just so true. So, he talks about that moment when the brothers are standing before Yosef and everything has just gone really down the tubes, you know, and he says like this, he goes...in this story, Hashem teaches us to never give up. To never lose hope. Even when it seems that salvation is very far away and God forbid, each day brings greater curses than the next, so salvation seems impossible. A person should strengthen himself with this story. He says like, look how bad things were for them and when things are going rough for you, go back to this story. He says, there's something planted like a secret in this story that will give you courage and strength to get through hard times. So he says a person should strengthen himself with this story by pondering the challenges that the brothers faced. They were accused of espionage after just trying to get food to save their family, right? Shimon was incarcerated for nothing, right in front of their very eyes. Then they were found with the goblet in Benjamin's bag and he was taken captive and it seemed absolutely impossible for them to get out of this situation.

He says, like imagine how bad it was, like they think it's bad they have a famine, and then imagine how much worse everything seems to get. I'm sure that everyone has experienced you

know, times like that in their life, where it just seems like what else can go wrong? There's no way for me to get out of this situation. And then he says, what do they do? How do they respond? So he finds the verse where they say, we are servants of our master. They're speaking to Joseph, right? Literally they were speaking to Yosef. But in Hebrew it's very interesting. The word for, like you know, your highness, or master is Adoni, but it's spelled the same way as Hashem's name, so he says, read this carefully. What they were actually saying, was we are servants of Hashem. We accept upon ourselves, we submit to whatever Hashem has decreed upon us. And at that moment, I'm just saying, I'm not fighting this. I'm not raging against these hardships, I'm just saying, I'm a servant of Hashem. Whatever Hashem wants to put on us, we're accepting that, we're submitting, we're surrendering, right? We're surrendering to this reality.

He says, once they submit, right after that you know, shortly after that, Yosef says to them, I am your brother. And what happens at that moment? When he says, I'm your brother. Nothing actually happened. Nothing changed in their life, right? All of those bad things in the physical reality, nothing changed. It just suddenly, their perspective like changed. Suddenly they were able to say, like, all of these things that happened, those were totally right. They had a totally different reason, we were not seeing what was right in front of our eyes. He says, nothing happened in physical reality. There was no difference between the previous moment and the following moment, but it was only that they realized that they were looking at their salvation all along. It was always there, right? They just didn't feel it. They couldn't recognize that their brother was standing right in front of their eyes.

So, it was like only retroactively when Hashem opened their eyes to see all of the good that was in the situation, then they were able to reinterpret everything that had happened to them and see that Hashem had already planted the salvation in the situation itself. It reminds me of you know, I work sometimes as a mediator, as Jeremy probably has mentioned, and when I was studying to be a mediator, one of the most powerful tools that we learned about was called reframing. So, you take a situation and it's like you can read it one way, but you could really also look at it another way. And by showing people just a different way of looking at the exact same situation, sometimes, it's able to open up their minds and their hearts to think about a different kind of solution, right?

So it's like Yosef then, is reframing the situation for them and he says you guys think that you did this terrible thing and sent me down to Egypt, but Hashem had a plan. He was doing this so that I would be able to save Egypt and save you guys and bring you food. There's a whole new way of looking at this. So the Meisiloch is giving us this kind of like, life tip, right, to when you're in this kind of situation where just each thing feels more cursed than the next. You can look back at the story, draw strength from it and realize that by surrendering and just saying, I am a servant of Hashem, you'll be able to then realize that the salvation was already planted in your reality before you could even feel it.

And then, at the end, he finishes with this most prophetic kind of vision for the future, which is just so mind-blowing. He finishes by saying, this whole thing that I'm telling you, it's true in your personal life, but it's also true for the entire people of Israel. He says, one day, this is how he finishes, he says, one day when it comes the time for Hashem's Presence to be revealed upon us and He's going to have mercy on Israel, when Israel is saved, we will realize that the salvation was right in front of our eyes all along and we just weren't able to see it.

And it's such an amazing prophecy because he's saying this, you know, probably 50 years before anyone thought of coming back to the Land, right? But look at our salvation, how the State of Israel was created. It was created by people suddenly realizing, what? We can just move to Israel and you know, build it up and make a country? That was just there all along, right? And so, it's like it's like this most inspiring and amazing vision that he's giving us, that you know, will hopefully continue to help us in the future. You know, now, there's like times where we feel like, how will we settle Judea and Samaria, it's so hard. How will we ever be able to rebuild the Temple? It seems impossible. But He's giving us this vision that one day it'll just become clear to us and we'll be able to see that it was right there all along. We just weren't ready, we hadn't yet gotten to the level of being able to see it.

And so this story, I think, can give us a lot of inspiration and strength, both in our individual lives and in our collective vision for the future. So have a great week, guys.

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila, metukah, you're awesome. You're incredible. We are so lucky to have you here. Thank you for always making the time for our fellowship. You make our fellowship so much more and like, it's just a matter of perspective. Ok, so we just need to adjust our eyes. So, here's now. Tehila gave us the background. It's like a bird's eye view. We know the end of the story, Joseph is revealed. We just like read the last page of the book and so now we know. Hakol hatovah. Everything is for the good. There was no real even bad there. It was just all good all the time. Everything that happened there was all being set up only for the good. Everything is exact. Everything is a part of this unfolding plan. We're already saved. We just don't see it yet.

Ok, I think that's true. And I think that's a good way to look at the world. But living life, we just can't always be there, we can't always see it. Sometimes, it's just hard to believe because sometimes life is really hard. And that's why we have the wisdom of the Bible. It's like, to learn from our own mistakes, yeah, anyone can do that. But to learn from the mistakes of our fathers and mothers so we don't have to make the same mistakes, that's real wisdom, and that's the wisdom that has been given to us.

So now, here's what we're going to do. This week, I'm going to look at the story now, from the perspective of the brothers, particularly Judah. As he is the leader, he is the representative of the brothers, he's the spokesman of the brothers, he's the one who rises up in the story. He's really highlighted throughout the whole story. And this is the last story of the book of Genesis. It's

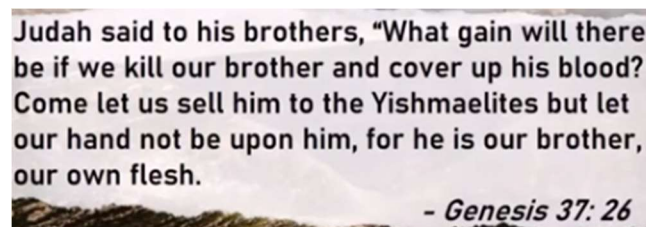
like all the lessons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that we learned about, just they're all coming to fruition here and these last foundational lessons of faith are taught to us, in this story.

You know, if you think about it, Abraham has three Torah portions. That's it. The story of Joseph and his brothers, they have four. That's significant. It's like the Torah is calling out to us, pay attention. There's four chapters here on this one saga. Listen. Pay attention. Everything is important. So last week, we learned about Joseph, and for those of you that are new to our fellowship, welcome, you're always welcome. Ask me questions about any of the past sessions, I'm always here, Tehila's always here, Ari is always here. We're here for you. And if you're still catching up, it's best to really watch these two sessions together. Judah and Joseph, Joseph and Judah, it doesn't really matter which one, but they really go together, they're like a part of the same whole.

And so, Judah and Joseph, are these two spiritual pillars of Israel, the foundational paths of all believers. Each path is so distinct, it's like we needed these giant men that represent ideas. That's what they are, they're like their lives are ideas. They manifested themselves fully in their ideal. And in their living, we now can integrate their life lessons into our lives. Because all of us have bits and pieces, we're made of them. So all of us have bits and pieces of them. And so, without really understanding this amazing story from both perspectives of Judah and Joseph, without putting yourself in both shoes and living the story out in both lenses, you can't really appreciate the absolute beauty of the masterpiece of this story.

So, here we're going to go. Let's begin. The story this time, but it's from Judah's perspective. And this is great background for those of you that are just joining us now. So here we go. Judah has a brother, his name is Joseph. Now while Joseph is beloved by Jacob and receives the famous coat of many colors, Judah is the born leader of the brothers. And he's not the oldest, but his character is just one of natural leadership. Joseph is beloved by Jacob, Judah is the leader of his brothers. Those are really good ways of just framing them.

And so, how do I know that Judah is the leader? How do I know that? First of all, we see that he's the one that promises to take responsibility for Benjamin when he, Benjamin, goes down. Judah is the one who steps up and leads the way in the encounter with Joseph in this parsha. He's obviously the leader, but he always was the leader. You can see it already from the very beginning when they sell Joseph into slavery. You see his leadership from the get-go. Look at Genesis 37:26:



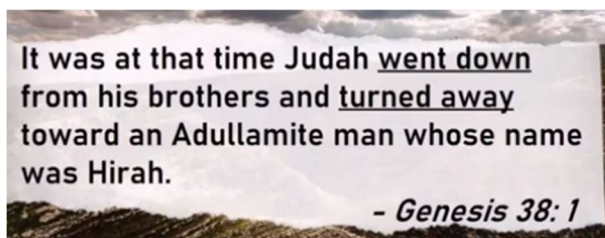
Judah said to his brothers, "What gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come let us sell him to the Yishmaelites but let our hand not be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.

- Genesis 37: 26

Already there, Judah is the last word. What Judah says, the brothers do. It's so clear to me that had Judah been like, all right guys, enough is enough. We scared him, ok, let's just get him out. Funny, funny, enough is enough. Let's pull him out of the thing now. Pranksters, all right. The brothers would not have gone off and done that. They listened to Judah. That's what happened. But Judah didn't do that. Judah's jealousy, his own malevolence in him, it overtook him.

And I think that's a really, really important lesson here. It's like we all have a yetzer hara. We all have a shadow. That's what Jung calls it. A shadow inside us. It's like, real evil lurks inside us humans. It's like, how did just regular Germans become Nazi soldiers? Like do what they did? It's not beyond human, it is within human, within the framework. We all have this evil in us. And it's like, perhaps more than the trauma of selling Yosef, more than the pain he caused his father, Jacob, Judah encountered the evil in him and that just messed him up. It's like I've heard a lot of people who suffer from PTSD, post traumatic stress disorder, and more often, it's not from what they saw, but what they did in wars. It's like, they come back from Afghanistan, they come back from Iraq, and it's like, how could they have done such things? They don't even know what to do with themselves. It's like realizing that that evil is inside us and if it's not integrated properly, it can come out into the world. And when you encounter that in yourself, it can just devastate you, it could just break you.

And that's exactly what happens to Judah. After selling Joseph, he's just crushed. It's like chapter 38 in Genesis is like a break in the story. At the end of chapter 37, Jacob is mourning Joseph and Joseph is sold into Potiphar's house, a slave into Egypt and then comes chapter 38. Look what it says:



It's like, we're in the middle of selling Joseph, and we sold him to Potiphar's house and then all of a sudden, it's like this whole little break and now, it's like a whole new story of Judah in chapter 38. He now goes down, Scripture says, he's turning away, it's like teaching us, like, bye Judah. I mean Judah's off. Judah is like gone. He leaves Israel. Judah sees a woman, not a part of the covenant. He's not a part of the family. He's not in line with God's mission. Judah is out. He's the first Jew to leave the fold of the newly formed nation of Israel. He's the first one of the children of Israel to walk down the path of like assimilation. He's just given up hope. He's given up on himself. His sin was just too much for him to bear. He's gone. He doesn't want to think about redemption, God, Israel, covenant. Just like, leave him alone, he's done, he's out, he's just lost and he's just got to find his own way.

So, he gets together with this woman. It's not clear if he marries her, if he's just doing his own thing. We don't even know her name. Judah is on this path. This path, it's like, oey, there's

only going to be suffering down this path. It's like you're suffering now, oh boy, get ready. One child dies, and then another child dies, and it's like instead of soul searching, it's like perhaps this is coming upon him that he should feel the pain of losing a child, realizing what he did to his father by selling Joseph and lying to him about being killed by an animal.

And Judah goes through a process here. It's like years he's in this story in chapter 38. He's gone for years. And you know, that's ok. Sometimes believers need to go on their own way and find out the hard way. They have to make their own way in the world. They have to find God on their own. And Judah looks at the death of his sons and instead of any self-reflection or soul searching or like maybe this is like, maybe I've done something wrong here, maybe that may have been communicated with. Instead, he blames the wife. He blames Tamar and it's like she must be a fault. And he tells her to leave the house, the heck with you. You're out of here. It's like, oh yeah, my future son, my third son, maybe you'll marry him, but it's like, in truth, he has like no intention of doing that at all.

And so, now look at him. Aside from lying to Jacob, he's lying to Tamar. Lying is now a lifestyle for people of despair. It's like it's easier to lie, it's harder to tell the truth. But lies in the instant might work, but in the long run, they just make you suffer more. Despair and lies make a hard life harder and make tragedy into just living hell. And we're learning that now as we watch this story unfold and I'm sure that you know people in the world that you've encountered that had a really rough situation and they just made it so much worse because they're so stupid. You know, now Judah is on the road and he sees a woman on the road and he's like, prostitute. Why not? You know, I'm already so lost. He's lying to his father, he's lying to himself. He's hopeless. Life is miserable anyways. At least I got the moment. It's like give into the body and your immediate lust. You know, that's just what there is. We're all going to die anyway. So what's the point?

And Judah takes his hard life and actually just makes it hell. And now, although hell is never mentioned in the Torah, hell throughout the ages is always depicted as this like bottomless pit of horrors. And that's there for a reason. Not to teach us about the afterlife, it's like, hello, this is our life right here and right now. It's like once you go down, there is no bottom. You think you're at rock bottom, there is always some idiot or some evil or some stupid thing that might be you, that can come and make it worse. It can just get worse. Happy families, they all kind of look the same. Dysfunctional miserable families have an incredible variety of misery. The misery has no bottom. It can always get worse. And Judah is just going worse and worse.

And it's like, later, he hears now that Tamar, his daughter-in-law is pregnant and he's like, wait a minute, she was supposed to be waiting for my third son. What if she's pregnant? It's like, his response is chilling. It's like chapter 38:24, look what it says:

And it was when about three months had passed, that Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has committed harlotry, and moreover, she has conceived by harlotry." Judah said, "Take her out let her be burned."
- Genesis 38:24

That's just dark. It's like, kill her. Kill the children inside her. He's told harlotry, like how would anyone know that? It's like, didn't he just go to a harlot? And now he's killing her for what he had just done? It's like, look how he's like lying to himself. It's like, there's just no way out. And like, Judah is not an evil guy. Judah is the best guy. We love Judah. He's like the best. He's such a good man. But like, in his young, adult life, he's just messing it up. And he's teaching us, an eternal lesson for all generations. It's like the lesson of truth. It's like the only path worth walking in this world, is a path of truth. For 22 years, Judah and his brothers are living a lie. They never tell Jacob. Jacob is just miserable sad. They never say, listen, he didn't really get eaten by that animal. We could go look for him. We sold him down for slavery. Like we could go find him. Maybe he's still alive. Lie after lie, after lie, his whole life becomes a lie. It's like everything is horrible. And Judah is truth. It's like his lying to himself is destroying his whole world now. And Judah comes to this moment of truth. But you need to understand that this is essential as a Jew. It's essential as a believer. It's essential as the king is from Judah. Judah means admitting the truth. Look at the Hebrew. This is unbelievable.

Judah - *Yehuda* - יהודה
 Thanks - *Mode* - מודה
 Admit - *Mode* - מודה
 Admit to the truth - *Mode al ha'emet* - מודה אל האמת

Mode we all know means thanks, but mode also means to admit. To admit, like you've done something wrong, I'm admitting that I've done something wrong. I'm admitting it. Mode al haemet, means I am acknowledging the truth. The name of Judah means thanks, but it also means admit. It's like when you're confronted with the truth, will you be mode al haemet, will you admit the truth when the truth hits you? The only way to walk with God is in truth. And truth begins where it's hardest. It begins with ourselves.

Ok, I need to go on a little rabbit trail here and that's good because it'll make when you go back and take notes on this session, it'll make it that much more worthwhile. But this is really key. In the Hebrew, that's the secrets of the world. We all know that. The world was created in Hebrew. Why is the word admit and saying thank you, the same word? It's the same exact word. Like what is that? Why is thank you and admit? In English, it's not even close to the same word. In Hebrew, it's the same, exact word. You say it the same, it's written the same, it is the same word. Admit and thanks. How do those two go together? Why are they so connected? It's like, they're connected to Judah, they're connected to Mashiach, they're

connected to all of us, as the Kingdom of believers. Like what's going on here? Why is mode and thanks the same word? That is so important.

Here's the deal. The most fundamental truth of our existence here, is that we did not earn this life. We did nothing to receive this gift. We were just born here. And the love we have in our lives, the blessings we have in our lives, I mean all the challenges, the whole amusement park of experiences that we get to live here, to experience here on earth, it's a gift. We didn't do anything to earn it. And to the degree that you can admit that you are undeserving, is the degree that you can give thanks. That's the connection. To the degree that you can admit that you are underserving, is the degree that you can give thanks. If you say, yeah, I'm entitled to that. I'm not going to say, thank you. The more you recognize the gift, that's the key. Now if you see life as a gift, you can see the Giver. We, the people of God, are God's witnesses to the world. Our witness is that life is a gift. Life is beautiful. We want this life to be good. It's so good. We just, we cherish every day. Thank you, God, for every day.

Think about the Jewish people now. A nation who undoubtedly has been through more tragedy and hardships than any other nation. Only we can bring this good news. Only we can speak this truth. Life is good, life is a gift. Life is a blessing. And if you don't see life as one incredible gift, you won't see God. But, if you can see the gift, then you'll be blessed to see the Giver. That's the key. And so, thanks and admit, Judah, Mashiach, it's all interconnected.

So now, Judah is confronted with this truth and it's the beinnig of his tshuva. Tamar brings the truth to him. And Tamar sends him his staff and his seal. And he's left and he's like, uh oh, I left that with the prostitute as collateral and that was her. Oey.

Chapter 38:25, look what it says, the most famous words:

And she was taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law saying, "By the man to whom these belong I am with child." And she said "Identify if you please, whose are this seal, this wrap and staff." Judah recognized and he said, "She is right. It is from me; inasmuch as I did not give her to Shelah my son." - Genesis 38:25

Hakarna. Identify if you please. It's like, wow. What's so important there, is when she said, identify please, some of the English translations, they don't get it. The Hebrew is really, really important here. It's a hyperlink, and it's such an important hyperlink. It's like it is the story itself. It is the heart of the story. It's like, it all comes home for Judah, right here. And Genesis 37:32, this is what Judah says when he brings the coat to his father. And he says -

**"We found this; identify if you please – Is this your son's coat or not?" He recognized it and he said, "My son's coat! A savage beast devoured him. Joseph has been torn to bits."
- Genesis 37:32**

It's like the same words, hakarna, identify if you please. They're in both stories and that just like hits Judah like a ton of bricks. Hakarna, hakarna, identify if you please. What happened to Judah here, it's like harkarna means like notice, identify, recognize, be aware, look. Saying you know yourself, how long, how low are you going to go? Are you really going to kill this innocent woman, is that like how bad life got now? We're really going to kill her now? I mean this is going to be embarrassing, telling everyone it was you with the prostitute? And now, its like, oey, nothing means anything anyway. Just maybe let her burn and just the hell with this whole world. Nope. It's like what kind of hell did Judah make of his life now? It's like, oh.

And here, it's like rock bottom and right here, he turns to the good. It's like, wait a minute. He starts to do tshuva. He can't go all in, all evil. He knows there's a truth in the world. He knows there's a moral code in the world that his great grandfather Abraham was spreading around the world. He can't betray everything.

And so, finally, he turns to the good. He starts to do tshuva. We're taught over and over that Hashem communicates to us in patterns in our life. All of the Torah is patterns upon patterns, messages are sent to us over and over again. Patterns in time, layers upon layers. Judah finally reads the pattern. It's like perhaps with Joseph, he put him in the pit and left it to God. Ok, but the pain he caused his father was unforgivable. Tamar, in the most unexpected turn of events, hits him with hakarna, identify this, recognize this. Don't you see? It's ok, she's right. There's tzedek, there's truth in the world, there's justice in the world. It's like there is right and there is wrong, even though I've done only wrong since Joseph. Hashem has not left me, he's still sending me messages to return to him. A spice cart in words. Hakarna, notice, recognize, don't just notice the staff and seal, notice the seal of God in your life. Be truthful. You have lied and you've gone off the path, but you can always realign yourself with truth. Stay truthful to yourself because as long as you're alive, Hashem is with you.

It's like from rock bottom, Judah begins his rise. He returns to his family. And then, like Avraham, he returns and it's like to Israel, and it's like a famine. But this is not an ordinary famine. It's 7 years of famine. And this is just where it gets like unbelievable. And in just ten minutes, we're going to finish this, but it's all worth it. So Joseph is taken out of prison. He's made chief executive over Egypt. And he has in his dreams now, seven years of famine, seven years of starvation. The brothers are going to come down and Joseph knows it. He has nine years to plan this scheme. And he knows his brothers are eventually going to run out of food and they're going to have to come down to Egypt. And his plan is exquisite.

The midrash tells us he establishes three rules for anyone coming down outside of Egypt. And that's in order to make sure that he gets his brothers. First you had to identify yourself when you cross the border. Your father's name, your grandfather's name. Who are you? Then you're only allowed to come down to Egypt, personally. You can't send a messenger, you can't send a slave. And you're only allowed to leave with two donkeys worth of food. That way, he knows he's going to bring the whole family down because they're all going to need food. And then what happens, in order to feed the whole family, they all have to come down.

Joseph now brings them finally down and he captures them. And then he speaks to them in patterns. Joseph communicates to them in a pattern. How did he come up with this plan? I give all creative credit in art, in science, in schemes, and planning, in business, anything creative, the source of that is God. So in my opinion, together with God, he makes this amazing plan. Whatever they did to him, he does to them. They called him a spy, he calls them a spy. They throw him into a pit, he throws them into a pit. Shimon according to the midrash, is the one that actually physically, like he's a thug, puts him into the pit. He takes Shimon and arrests him. He sends them up and it's like, oh my goodness, they don't even know what's happened to them now. It's like, what are we going to do? The first signs of tshuva, you can actually see happening though. Once they do that, they see that something's wrong here now.

And they're just trying to explain, we're not spies. Look at Genesis 42:13:

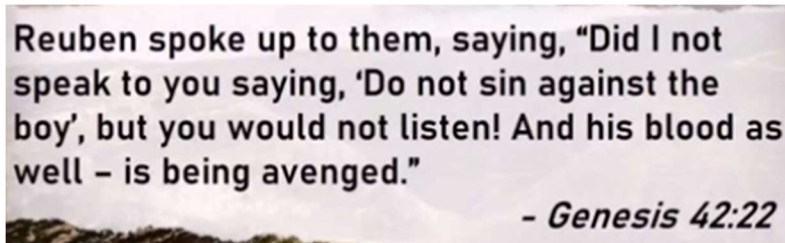
And they replied, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father and the one is gone."
- Genesis 42:13

In Hebrew, it really stands out. It's like it shouldn't have said, "the one," it's like a weird language. It's like you should have said and the other one, or the second one, or the second brother. It's like "the one" and "the one" is gone. It's like they now recognize that Joseph, he was "the one." He was always "the one." It's like, I think, the movie, The Matrix, that borrows "the one." They like took it right here from the Bible. That was that phraseology, that's where it came from Joseph was "the one," and they recognized that.

And Joseph imprisons Shimon, the brothers have their first wave of teshuva wash over them. Again, chapter 42:21 -

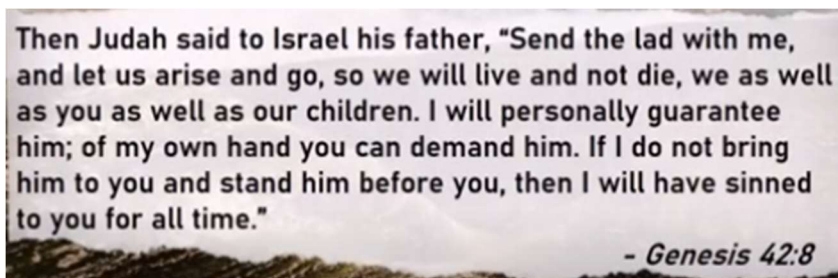
"Then they said to one another, "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed; that is why this anguish has come upon us."
- Genesis 42:21

Immediately they saw the pattern and they were like, oey, this is what is happening here. And that same conversation by the way, you also get a glimpse of why Reuven is not the leader. Even though he's the oldest. Chapter 42:22:



Reuben spoke up to them, saying, "Did I not speak to you saying, 'Do not sin against the boy', but you would not listen! And his blood as well - is being avenged."
- Genesis 42:22

So Reuven, even still until today, he doesn't really take responsibility for the actions. He can't be the leader. Only Judah. And so here we go. Reuven wasn't made, so we have Judah, is like the mode. And so Joseph sends them back and say, if you want to release your brother, Shimon, you have to bring back, Benjamin. Well, Jacob is not happy about that. Jacob does not want to send Benjamin back. But Joseph knows he's going to have to. They're going to run out of food. And so, eventually he has to send them back, even though he doesn't want to. So Judah rises up and speaks to Jacob. Here's what he says:

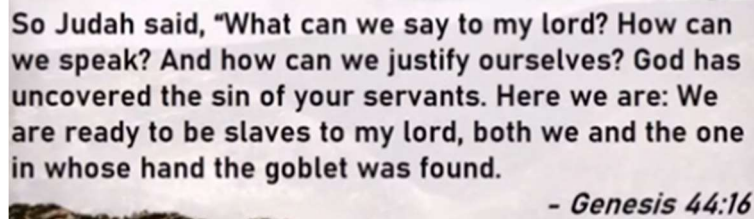


Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and let us arise and go, so we will live and not die, we as well as you as well as our children. I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him. If I do not bring him to you and stand him before you, then I will have sinned to you for all time."
- Genesis 42:8

Judah once again, rises up, takes responsibility, takes the lead. And really, they have no choice. Jacob doesn't want to send them down, but there's really no way out of it. So the brothers come down and Joseph frames Benjamin. He makes it look like Benjamin takes the goblet. And it's like, oh my goodness, what are they going to do now? He takes him and he arrests Benjamin and the brothers are like, oh! What? Benjamin is broken, they can't believe how bad this situation is. Okay, it's worse now.

And the midrash says that they actually think that Benjamin stole the goblet. It's an interesting take. It's like his mother stole the idols from Lavan and so Benjamin, like his mom, stole the goblet of divination. It's like, they couldn't imagine anything else. Like, how the heck did that goblet get into Benjamin... Benjamin must have actually stolen it. So now, they actually have an alibi. They have an alibi for Jacob. It's like the dumb kid did it to himself. It's like they could have gone back and they could have told Benjamin stole the second thing from Pharaoh. It's not our fault. I mean, he stole the stuff from Pharaoh. And he's in prison now. We were good.

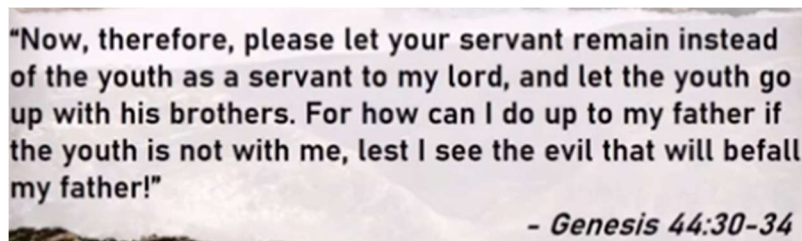
It's like, oh, so now look what happens here. What do the brothers do? They're so devastated, they break down crying. Ready to do whatever they can to save Benjamin. And once again Judah takes the lead. And Judah now says...



So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has uncovered the sin of your servants. Here we are: We are ready to be slaves to my lord, both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found."

- Genesis 44:16

So Judah says, listen. Where Benjamin goes, we go. All of us are your slaves. If you take Benjamin, we're not going back. We're all here with you. And Joseph doesn't have it. Joseph says, I'm sorry. That's just not the way this is going to go. That's not the law of our land. It's like, that's just not the way things work. It's like the climax now. It ends there. It's like what? What's going to happen now? It's like the climax. Judah approaches, Judah steps up, he rises to the occasion and deliver the plea that finally opens Joseph's heart. It's in Genesis 44, the last verses are 30 and 34:



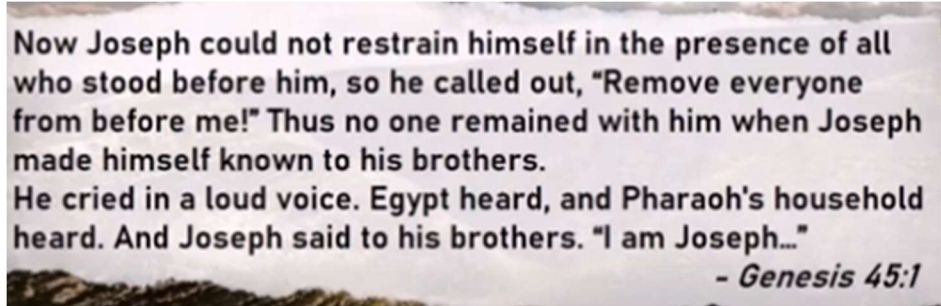
"Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the youth as a servant to my lord, and let the youth go up with his brothers. For how can I do up to my father if the youth is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father!"

- Genesis 44:30-34

Judah finally takes responsibility for what he did for his father. And he's like, I'm giving it all up. I'll give my entire life, just not to make that sin again. And the brothers are in the same situation. The most beloved brother is in a pit and Judah does tshuva gamora, complete tshuva, he fixes things at the root. The same potential sin, the same circumstances, the same jealousy, the same beloved mother. The alibi is ready for Jacob. Joseph gave them the ability to do complete tshuva and Judah comes out like a champion.

And after Joseph hears Judah's willingness to give up his life for Benjamin, he can't help it anymore. He just totally breaks down. Joseph never cries. You never hear him cry, no matter what happens. And you can see later, he's like with his brothers in the pit, he's not crying, he's sold into slavery, he's never cried. Twenty-two years of tears explode out. His heart overflows with emotion and like an earthquake of spiritual energy, just spreads across Egypt.

Genesis, chapter 45:1:



Now Joseph could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, "Remove everyone from before me!" Thus no one remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He cried in a loud voice. Egypt heard, and Pharaoh's household heard. And Joseph said to his brothers. "I am Joseph..."
- Genesis 45:1

They heard him screaming. It's like, those words changed everything. It's like those two things, it's like two things are incredible. First that Judah is willing to give over his entire life to slavery to save Benjamin. That is so heroic. It's such a responsibility. It's such love. It's like you just have to love Judah for all that he's been through. He like comes back stronger and better. He is what King David is made of. He is the root of Mashiach. But something just as remarkable. Joseph is able to forgive his brothers. It's like the brothers ruined his life. Twenty-two years. He was thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, lived as a prisoner in a dungeon. It's like 22 years. It's like they took this young 17-year-old, upstanding good boy and they ruined his life. It's like, why? Because you're jealous? Like the hell with them. How can you forgive someone who did that to you?

It's like, that's why he's called Joseph, the Tzadik. He's like Joseph the righteous because more than anything, he had this inner strength to forgive. Joseph is the tzadik because he really saw that everything is a part of God's master plan. He has the ability to truly forgive. It's like, it wasn't them, they were just agents doing what God had ordained, what needed to be done. It's the only way to live, to never hold onto regrets.

There's an ancient Judean practice before you go to bed, every night, there's a small prayer and you say, I hereby forgive and pardon anyone who angered me today, who sinned against me today, whether in my body and my finances, in my honor or anything that is mine. I forgive them, and I pardon them.

So go to bed with no resentment. Go to bed forgiving everyone. We learned that from Joseph, that is the legacy of Joseph. Every Jew goes to bed at nighttime, forgiving everyone. It's like the legacy of forgiveness, forgiving our brothers is the path to redemption. And for Judah, his legacy. It's like what brought the King of Israel. It's like maybe the most important message for every believer. It's like, there are some times, like stories get dark. It's like dark times. And in the darkest of times, when he doesn't believe, there's like mistakes upon mistakes, and in this process, he grew to haker himself. It's like sometimes, our children, they just need to go on their own path, they have to find their own way. That's the part of Judah. And they may hurt and they may stumble and they may fall and they might grow. But they have to haker, they have to know themselves, they have to grow in that path.

It's the path of the Jew. Israel is a struggle. To struggle with man and to struggle with God. It's like, they're Joseph souls. They're just pure and true. It's like they are the one. They are so unique. The King of Israel though, is the king of all believers. He's just like our king, he's the king of us. And like, he's here to teach us that even the darkest times, when Judah is lost, when he gave up hope on life and he thought he gave up on God and he turned to prostitution and total despair. In that place of disbelief and despair, God created the seeds of Mashiach. It's like these stories are here to give us strength in these dark times.

Israel is going into its third lockdown. Man, without the right eyes, this could look dark. But know, that from this time, the light of redemption is on the way. It's like very soon, like the brothers heard from Yosef, we're all going to hear the words, Ani Hashem. I am Hashem. Like when Joseph said, I am Joseph. I am Hashem and everything is going to fall right into place. That is the moment of redemption and we are so close.

So, blessings to all of you. Bless you all for blessing us. You are a blessing to Israel, you're a blessing to the universe, you're a blessing to our families, you're a blessing to our farm, to our mission, to this fellowship. Thank you all. For those who gave like last minute end of the year gifts to our work in Judea and the Land of Israel and to our fellowship here. Our fellowship is stronger because of you and we thank you so much for that. You are literally our angels shining lights for us in Judea. And you should all be blessed from Zion.

Aaron blessing

May the love of the brothers just fall into our lives for all of us.